

Lesson Plan Background

In the intermediate/advanced ESL class that I teach, the parents possess strong oral skills and are comfortable speaking in English about common, everyday topics. They love talking about their children, and they routinely tell me how proud they are that their children do well in school and love to read. However, they are not always confident about sharing stories with their children in English.

The objective of this lesson is for parents to develop the language skills and confidence needed to tell a story in English to their children, peers, and other school and community members. Students were really nervous as we began talking about the lesson objective, but the positive response at the end of cycle party where they showcased their new storytelling skills was priceless.

For this lesson, students should first select a text or story that they are interested in using for a storytelling activity. As a class, they can decide if they all want to tell the same story or if they will select different stories. Some class time should be spent helping the students to understand their story, discuss new vocabulary, etc.

The REEP Family Literacy Curriculum (www.reepworld.org) provided the framework for the lesson plan design. The REEP Lesson Plan Form found on this website provides the structure for the lesson plan. The lesson was used with Level C learners who selected the "Parents as Teachers" unit from the curriculum.

Materials to support the storytelling objectives came from the Story Arts Online! website (www.storyarts.org). Specific links are referenced in the lesson plan. Students practiced their storytelling skills using a story that we had selected in class prior to this lesson on Storytelling. The story "Mama, Do You Love Me?" by Barbara Joose provided an excellent launching pad for a follow up activity in which students actually wrote their own version of the story, using one of their own children to portray the child in the story and using real-life problems for the questions. After writing their story, students made a book of their own story, complete with simple illustrations. It was this book that we then used for the Storytelling Lesson Plan that follows. During the end-of-cycle celebration, students applied their new storytelling skills by telling their stories to their classmates, families, friends, and other school staff present that evening.

Audience of Learners

Parents in the intermediate/advanced ESL class (SPL 5-7 or NRS High Intermediate/Low Advanced) in our Family English Program were the primary audience for this lesson. All of the parents had at least one child in grades PreK-12 in our public school system. The majority of them are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program.

Since the parents applied their storytelling skills at our end of cycle party, other learners in our audience included their own children and other family members. The children were very proud to see their Mom or Dad telling a story in English in front of their peers! Everyone cheered for each other at the end. The embraces, kisses, high fives, and comments of "good job" underlined the pride the parents felt. Each story told was a very touching moment! The children were excited to be presented with their own copy of the story as well.